

Secretary Haig

Interview on "Meet the Press"

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Secretary Haig was interviewed on NBC's "Meet the Press" on March 29, 1981, by Bill Monroe (NBC News), Barry Schweid (Associated Press), Georgie Anne Geyer (Universal Syndicate), and Marvin Kalb (NBC News).

Q. What can you tell us about the outlook in Poland as of this moment?

A. We've been watching the situation with a stepped-up intensity in recent hours and the situation is still very, very tense. There are some good and also some continuing worrisome signs.

Q. The TASS news agency, the official Soviet agency, said today that Poland is in a state of mounting anarchy and accuses the Solidarity Union movement of launching an open struggle against the Polish state. Doesn't that have an ominous ring to you?

A. Indeed it does, and that's very consistent with the other worrisome trends we've been watching, including the military exercise which has been extended for an indefinite period, growing frictions between the moderate and rightist elements in the political leadership itself, problems within the economic situation in Poland, food shortages, and some indications of growing frictions between the moderates and the extremists in the political hierarchy.

Q. So the situation is no less critical than you felt it was a couple of days ago?

A. I think there are some signs that perhaps a major crisis can be avoided if the moderate elements in the political leadership continue to prevail and maintain their influence.

Q. The United States warned the Polish Government—not the Soviets, but the Polish Government—3 days ago not to use force against the Polish unions. Would Western nations, would the United States consider some kind of sanctions against the Polish Government if they took such action that they would regard as internal?

A. I believe it is very hard at this juncture to determine whether such actions would be internal or external despite the fact that internal forces may have applied the repression. The key issue here is that Poland is facing some serious and grave economic and food shortage problems, and we in the West, the United States and our allies, would like to be helpful. But should there be a repression, an elimination of the progress achieved thus far, and a rolling back, if you will, this would become increasingly complex and difficult for us.

Q. As the situation stands now, do you anticipate the Russians moving troops into Poland?

A. I have said, and I repeat today, that that situation is neither imminent or inevitable. I do believe that that varies hour to hour by various postures taken by Soviet forces. And at this moment, that posture is at a heightened state of readiness, with communications in place, and with some indications of increased posturing which could lead to that, so we are watching it very, very carefully.

Q. What would be the effect, do you think, on the Soviet empire if the Russians moved in? In a sense, wouldn't it be good for U.S. objectives because it might lead to a dissolution of the empire?

A. In no way. I think any application of force in the internal affairs of the Polish people could have unforeseen and most dangerous consequences, and I don't know of any responsible official in this Administration that would welcome that outcome.

Q. Well, then, the United States would be well served, I suppose, by propping up the Polish economy, and yet you are punishing the Russians with a grain embargo. Isn't there some anomaly there?

A. There are some inconsistencies, as there are always contradictions in the conduct of our affairs. Clearly, we do seek to help alleviate the suffering and the anguish of the Polish people at this difficult time. As you know, we inherited a grain embargo, and the intentions of the President are, of course, to lift that at the earliest possible moment. He has never favored it, and I have never favored it. But the act of doing so at this juncture could send out very deleterious signals in the context of our ability to manage East-West relations and the Polish issue specifically.

Q. Regarding the events of this week and the conflict or nonconflict between the White House and the State Department, you yourself have worked in the White House in an ex-

traordinarily high position, and many people have said that the problem was more personalities than of ideology. If you were President Reagan, how would you have handled the strong personality of Alexander Haig?

A. I have that problem continuously. I think the situation has clearly been resolved and resolved in a very happy way, as the President said on Friday in an interview with the *Washington Post*. You know, there are questions of substance—real issues, if you will—in foreign policy and questions of form. This involved a question of form. That has been resolved and resolved very happily to my satisfaction, and I know, from my discussions with the President, with his satisfaction. The time has come now to get on with dealing with the questions of real issues for the American people in the foreign policy area, and that's what I intend to do.

Q. Then there were not really questions of substance or of ideology that were different between the White House staff and yourself?

A. I'm not aware of a single instance thus far in my relationships with President Reagan that we had any differences, either of nuance or even tactics, in the conduct of the nation's foreign affairs. I know I am here because he saw certain compatibility between our two viewpoints, and I think that is a very happy circumstance for the American people.

Q. Would the events of this week change your behavior in any way, subtle or direct?

A. That suggests other aspects of my behavior, day to day. I think the real question here—and that comes up regularly—is my effectiveness influenced by these passing events? My answer to that is, not in any way at all. You know, it is dealing with the real issues that my report card will be rendered at some point in time by the President and by the American people. And so the answer to that question will have nothing to do with these events but rather how we deal with these growing and, I think, unprecedented dangers to our nation in the foreign policy area.

Q. Just to pick up a couple of points here, do you feel that last Tuesday when you went public with what seemed to be criticism of the crisis management and arrangement with Vice President Bush at the top of that, that some way or another you had made a mistake?

A. I think there were mistakes made across the board. There were misunderstandings. And it was my view that what I revealed in my testimony was totally consistent with the state of the nondecision on that issue at the time. But those things happen. Communications sometimes are not all we would like to have them. This is an Administration that is evolving in the context of form. I don't think there is much of a learning curve to be achieved in the area of substance and that's the important aspect of it, and I'm very comfortable with it.

Q. How are you going to avoid that kind of misunderstanding in the future? Have you and the President worked out an arrangement that is more precise than the looseness that obviously bred the problem?

A. Indeed, of course, this is so, and it involves more regular meetings between the two of us, and it involves some other steps which will be taken in the near future in the form area. But I want you to know that I am very, very comfortable with the relationship that President Reagan has established with me and my role with respect to that relationship, and I expect it to be intimate and highly successful in the period ahead.

Q. On Poland, you mentioned earlier that there are some good signs. You've talked about the worrisome signs. What are the good ones?

A. The good signs would involve some indication that the moderate elements in the political structure of Poland seem to be surviving well at the current moment and maybe will continue to prevail.

Q. Do you feel—let me ask it this way—on what basis do you feel the United States can complain about a Polish suppression of Polish workers?

A. I think any rollback of the progress made with respect to reform in Poland would be historically and inevitably a matter of great concern to the United States.

Q. But you have always described it as an internal matter, the last Administration and you as well. So if the advance is internal, wouldn't the retreat be internal as well?

A. Your question there involves what I would call the degree of interrelationship between the political leadership in Poland and the Soviet Union.

And clearly here the lines are—have existed for all the years since the Second World War, and the annexation or restructuring of Poland.

Q. Do you feel, when you mention the heightened state of alert of Soviet forces—that indeed forces, for example, are being moved out of barracks toward borders—has there actually been a movement of Soviet forces into Poland as part of the recent exercises?

A. No. There were some adjustments, especially with sophisticated communications capabilities, some of which are occurring without the participation and cognizance of the Polish military forces, which is a worrisome sign, in the first instance. But I think most of the worrisome signs involve readiness measures being taken along the Baltic military region, in East Germany, and in some of the other satellite states.

Q. President Reagan refers to the leftist guerrillas in El Salvador as terrorists, and he speaks of revolution being exported to the Americas. I'd like to ask whether the U.S. Government is totally hostile to the left-wing guerrillas in El Salvador, whether there might be some feeling that some of those guerrillas may be, in their own minds, genuinely fed up with what they look on as oppression, past injustice, and right-wing murder squads?

A. Of course, there are very clear and strong overtones of those influences in the rebel movement. I would suggest that the opposition in the first instance, the initial revolution which placed the current government in place was a consequence of those extremes of the right. And we don't welcome them, and we don't endorse them. But what is clearly evident to us is that the leftist movement, the rebel activity, its command, control, and direction, now is essentially in the hands of external forces—Cuban, Nicaraguan, and, of course, indirectly Soviet.

Q. You feel those left-wing guerrillas in El Salvador are in the control of, being manipulated by, being dominated by Communists?

A. There's no question about that. We have very sophisticated, detailed, hard evidence to confirm it. For example, the command and control of communications network that has been implanted in El Salvador, which manipulates the rebel activity, is centralized outside of El Salvador.

Q. You have been criticized for what your critics look on as an over-emphasis on El Salvador altogether and for an overemphasis on the military aspect of it. What you are now saying about the guerrillas, does that mean that there is no possibility in your mind for a political settlement, some kind of compromise that will involve all sides?

A. Not at all, we welcome a political settlement. Indeed, that's the objective we've established for ourselves in the conduct of our policies which incidentally involve the three-to-one ratio of economic assistance, development assistance, to the military assistance. Now, President Duarte has called for early elections in El Salvador. He offered 3 weeks ago to establish an electoral commission. He's offered amnesty to the rebels to come in and join and welcomed all parties to participate in this electoral commission and early elections, which would be a reflection of self-determination and the will of the people of El Salvador. What we are opposed to is the imposition of external assistance and direction and, frankly, takeover in the subsequent government.

Q. The guerrillas of another sort operating in Angola, in fact it is a reverse situation, you have a leftist government, you have guerrillas that are non-Communist, the Administration has called for repeal of the Clark amendment which prevented the United States from assisting guerrillas. Possibly looking for some consistency or wondering about consistency, what is the Administration's intentions toward those guerrillas, and isn't that an external application to a domestic situation? Put another way, why does the United States have a right to do something in another country that the Soviets don't have the right to do?

A. I'm glad you asked that question, because there has been a lot of speculation, some of which is misinformed, with respect to our future policies toward Angola. As you know, we have asked, along with a number of other legislative reforms, that we lift the so-called Clark amendment. We've also asked for additional modifications of restrictions on executive power that involve Pakistan and which involve Argentina. This is a matter of principle.

Now, having said that, let me assure you that a unilateral restriction of American policy options in dealing with a dynamic and dangerous situation of the kind that exists today in southern Africa, automatically *a priori*, deprives

us of the kind of influence we would want in our efforts in the future to seek a negotiated peaceful outcome of southern African problems, including Namibia, and ultimately and above all, the withdrawal, promptly, of Cuban forces from Angola.

Q. Word is beginning to leak out that a mission will be going to southern Africa, headed by Mr. Crocker [Chester A. Crocker, designate for Assistant Secretary for African Affairs], will that mission go to Angola, and how will you deal with the problem of telling that government about this principle?

A. As I have been stating publicly up until now, we have been in the process of a very thorough review of America's southern African policies. We've completed the first phase, and we'll now move into a second phase which involves some active diplomacy, and that will indeed include some travel by American officials to the area. It will involve discussions with the front-line states [Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe], with South Africa, and with the so-called "Five"—our European partners [France, Federal Republic of Germany, and the United Kingdom], Canada, and ourselves, that have been involved in the U.N. process on Namibia.

Now, it would be premature for me to disclose today precisely who the discussions will be held with and the particular venues or timing, but this will happen very shortly, and I think it will tend to disabuse a number of elements in our country who have been both concerned and incredulous about some dramatic shifts in American policies in southern Africa, which are not justified. We will pursue our own policies, and they will be different from the previous Administration's but not in the context of some of the speculative stories that you have read recently.

Q. The first visitors to Washington these last few months have tended to be what Ambassador Kirkpatrick [Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, U.S. Representative to the United Nations] has called the oppressive authoritarians, the South Koreans, the Argentines, etc., and the South Africans this week, albeit undercover. The—many people feel that your policies of countering the Soviet Union are very well taken but they question whether we are not going overboard in the other side in supporting these sorts of countries so enthusiastically. Are we doing that?

A. I think in some respects that's a bum rap. I think the first thing that I want to make clear to our viewers is that it's been our experience that one deals with contesting parties on any issue best through a normal relationship of confidence and friendship, not by isolation and the creation of paranoia. Inevitably, any negotiating process is best served by that kind of a relationship. Now, you will note that this past week I met with the Foreign Minister of Nigeria, who I don't think you would categorize as a repressionist, authoritarian diplomat. We have spoken to all sides, and we will speak to all sides. And we will hope in the period ahead to create a degree of confidence in all sides, that our efforts in the direction of peaceful solutions are going to be credible and will be able to influence the outcome of events rather than to indulge in high-profile public condemnations of policies we don't like. These condemnations should take place in the quietude of diplomacy and not be tests of manhood, to refer to that term again.

Q. In these meetings, for instance with the South Koreans and the Argentines, were points put forward to deal with the human rights violations? In effect, is it being dealt with in the quiet of diplomacy, as you suggest?

A. The very act of suggesting that to be the case would be a violation of the requirement that we not divulge these things publicly. Let me assure you that with respect to Korea, our historic relationship with that government is going to be strengthened and broadened in the period ahead. We are not oblivious to violations of human rights or other individual freedoms that we seek to aspire and which we have been assured the current leadership seeks to broaden itself, and I think recent activities by that government confirm that.

The same would apply specifically to Argentina, where we had extensive forthcoming and most cordial discussions with President Viola, and I think even the experiences of our sharpest critics on the Hill would have confirmed that this is a modern, enlightened man, with whom we best work in a constructive way. Isolation and the creation of insecurity creates the intractable attitudes that have resulted in no progress in the past.

Q. The national security adviser, Richard Allen, spoke last week and in talking about Western Europe said there is outright pacifist sentiment there. The last national security adviser spoke about European self-

Finlandization, which pretty much comes to the same thing. Do you share these views? Do you feel that they cut across your efforts to improve relations with our West European allies?

A. I would first want to emphasize that our relationships with our Western European partners have never been as good or as promising as they are today, and I say that after the intimate and lengthy discussions we have held with the key foreign ministers from Europe, from Canada, and there is a total convergence of view.

Now, we have these same sentiments that Mr. Allen talked about in Europe in our own country. All of these leaders in Europe preside over tightly balanced constituencies and of course there are some worrisome overtones that have been evident for a decade or more. Our problem is to work quietly

with our friends and allies in Europe to try to develop a consensus of concern about the threats facing us all, including the one Mr. Allen touched upon with which I wouldn't care to give a value judgment.

But this is the way that we are going to succeed in the period ahead and I'm very confident that that's the policy of Mr. Reagan, and it is certainly the policy of our Department of State at this juncture.

Q. Do you feel—and I don't want to throw too simplistic sounding a question at you when we have less than a minute to go—but is it your view that the United States and the Soviet Union can indeed coexist peacefully, or do you feel the Russians are out for what used to be called world domination?

A. I've often said that a question of that kind is irrelevant. The simple facts are that we are in competition in a number of fundamental areas and that will result in competition and confrontation for the period ahead. What is important is that our Soviet partners in this duality at long last recognize that they must abide by international rule of law and not indulge in the kind of illegal interventionism that they have been indulging in in the period past, at an increasing level and with great dangers to world peace. ■

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